



United States Department of Agriculture

Natural Resources Conservation Service Earth Team

Volunteer Showcase

Missouri's Most Colorful Volunteer is an Advocate for NRCS

Dressed in his customary tie-dyed shirt, Ben Avis earns the unofficial title as Missouri's most colorful volunteer. It's not the bright colors of Avis's shirts that are attractive to the NRCS staff in Warren County, though. They appreciate Avis's assistance in educating other farmers about beneficial management practices and about how NRCS can help.

"Ben is a passionate volunteer and an outspoken supporter of NRCS programs and services," NRCS Resource Conservationist Sarah Szachnieski said.

Avis, and his brother David, have utilized NRCS financial and technical assistance themselves, primarily in setting up a rotational grazing system, and related to Conservation Stewardship Program and Conservation Reserve Program contracts.

Szachnieski said the Avis brothers have helped NRCS and the local soil and water conservation district by opening their farm for training sessions, grazing schools, grazing tours or to any landowner who wants to better understand the systems installed on the Avis farm. Szachnieski says Ben Avis often calms the fears of people who have not worked with NRCS before, and might be wary of government involvement in their farming operations.



NRCS Earth Team Volunteer Ben Avis and NRCS Resource Conservationist Sarah Szachnieski

"I tell people that they don't have to worry about working with the government," Avis said. "I've never had a bad experience with them. It's only been a good experience."

District Conservationist Tammy Teeter said the assistance that Avis provides goes well beyond his official volunteer hours.

"Ben's volunteering has saved us lots in staff time and meeting room expenses, and his promotion of our programs has been invaluable," Teeter said.

The Earth Team is the volunteer component of the Natural Resources Conservation Service. If you are interested in volunteering, contact the National Earth Team Office at 888-526-3227 or visit:

<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/EarthTeam>

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